

Conflict Weekly

An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

6 April 2022, Vol.3, No.1

Political Crises in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Tunisia; Ceasefire in Yemen; and the Battle for Mariupol

Chrishari de Alwis Gunasekare, Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Apoorva Sudhakar, Lavanya Ravi, and Sruthi Sadasivam



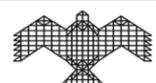
Photo Source: REUTERS/Dinuka Liyanawatte

Sri Lanka: The economic woes spiral into a political crisis

[In the news](#)

On 1 April 2021, Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa declared a state of emergency following protests over the economic crisis. In his address, he said: "At this crucial juncture the country needs stability to weather the current financial crisis and difficulties."

On 5 April, the government lost its majority in the Parliament, following a series of resignations by the Parliamentarians, from the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) and its alliance partner, the Sri Lankan Freedom Party (SLFP). Earlier, the Cabinet ministers also handed over their resignations, and most of the political parties withdrew their support to the ruling party to remain independent within the Parliament.



On 5 April, the President revoked the emergency. During the week, people's protests were being held island-wide, with the citizens demanding the President resign over the severe economic crisis. On the protests, UN Human Rights Chief said: "the drift towards militarisation and the weakening of institutional checks and balances in Sri Lanka have affected the State's ability to effectively tackle the economic crisis."

Issues at large

First, the state of emergency. An extraordinary gazette notification was issued on 1 April, which can only be implemented in a situation of "exceptional threat, danger, or disaster" in order to secure "national security, public order, and undisrupted essential services." The emergency was declared on the heels of discontented citizens gathering outside the President's residence in a Colombo suburb on 31 March, demanding he step down immediately. The protest turned violent when the riot squads and the special task force members used rubber bullets and batons to disperse the angry crowds. Further repression came in the form of an island-wide curfew being implemented on 2 April, with an extraordinary gazette being issued on the same day prohibiting the people from gathering in public spaces. A social media ban was implemented at midnight and lasted for over 15 hours, which was put in place to maintain public order.

Second, the protests. Non-partisan people's protests have been ongoing for over a month, which intensified last week as the people were forced to endure a 13-hour-long power cut on 31 March. People took to the streets in spite of the curfew and being aware that they could be arrested without a warrant under the emergency regulations. However, an interesting development was that in most cases, the protesting public were not deterred by law enforcement officers. The slogan "Gota Go Home" has been taken up by the masses, as they demand the President to step down and to be held accountable for the current crisis. Some of the protesters surrounded the residencies of several Cabinet Ministers, demanding that they resign as well.

Third, the political crisis, following resignations. With the growing public dissent, all Ministers of the Cabinet resigned from their posts on 4 April. However, many experts questioned the constitutionality of this move; according to Article 49 of the Constitution, the Cabinet will not stand dissolved as long as the Prime Minister continues to hold office. A Cabinet reshuffle was done on the same day, with former Justice Minister Ali Sabry being appointed as the new Finance Minister. However, he handed over his resignation the next day. Similarly, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka also handed over his resignation saying: "In the context of all Cabinet Ministers resigning, I have today submitted my resignation." In the meantime, the President invited all political parties representing the Parliament to accept new ministerial posts and assist in resolving the crisis, which was rejected.

The Parliament was reconvened on 5 April, as party leaders agreed to hold a two-day Parliamentary debate over the prevailing situation. As of now, over 40 Ministers have declared that they will leave the government and function independently. This includes Ministers from ruling party Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP), Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), and Ceylon Workers' Congress (CWC). Meanwhile, Parliamentary opposition and Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) leader Sajith Premadasa during the Parliamentary session proposed to abolish the Executive Presidency immediately stating: "There should not be a voice that is contrary to the voice on the streets. And the voice is that there should be change. What the people want is for this President and the entire government to step down."

Fourth, the continuing economic crisis. In the backdrop of the growing citizen uprisings are the country's deteriorating economic status. The regular load shedding of electricity continues while people are still queuing outside filling stations for scarce fuel supplies. On 4 April the Sri Lankan Stock Exchange halted trading as the share market plunged 5.9 per cent. The resignation of the Finance Minister comes as a blow in such a situation, as talks for an IMF programme are scheduled to take place in the coming days.

In perspective

First, the public protests have no sign of dying out and continue to grow in strength. This is perhaps the first time in recorded history since the Independence that Sri Lankan masses, despite their ethnicity, religious identity, or social class, have united against the ruling government. The movement is primarily led by the youth, and the public sentiment leans towards rejecting all existing political parties and calling for a complete reform of the current political system.

Second, the uncertain future. At this point, the people have completely lost faith in the Rajapaksa regime. As more MPs declare that they will operate independently, the ruling government has lost the Parliamentary majority. Even if the Rajapaksa regime does step down, the path ahead for Sri Lanka is unknown. The people would still have to deal with the mounting public debt while dealing with more shortages. Even if the talks for an IMF programme become successful, the austerity measures imposed will likely increase the burden on the public. However, Sri Lankan people remain hopeful as they protest for change, searching desperately for a light at the end of a dark tunnel.

Pakistan: National Assembly dissolved; Imran Khan de-notified as prime minister

In the news

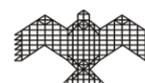
On 3 April, President Arif Alvi dissolved the National Assembly on Imran Khan's advice under Article 58 of the Constitution. Following this decision, the Cabinet Division issued a notification, de-notifying Imran Khan as the prime minister and the 52-member federal cabinet. In his address to the nation, Imran Khan said, "Prepare for elections. No corrupt forces will decide what the future of the country will be. When the assemblies will be dissolved, the procedure for the next elections and the caretaker government will begin."

On the same day, National Assembly Deputy Speaker Qasim Suri dismissed the no-confidence motion submitted by the joint opposition to removing the prime minister, terming it as "unconstitutional" under Article 5 of the constitution. Previously, the opposition in the National Assembly went ahead with the proceedings of the house despite its dissolution and completed the voting process on the no-trust motion against Imran Khan. The opposition declared the vote successful with 197 votes and the proceedings as "legal and valid."

Following the series of events, the Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial ruled that all orders and actions initiated by the President and prime minister regarding the dissolution of the National Assembly would be subject to the court's order.

Issues at large

First, the collapse of the PTI collation. Over the recent months, it became evident that the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) collation was falling apart. The party's allies were seen switching sides and losing confidence in the PTI. Initially, the with PTI with 155 Members of



National Assembly (MNAs) had the required 172 number if the no-confidence vote was to take place because of its collation allies which comprised of Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) (7), Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) (5), Pakistan Muslim League-Q (PML-Q) (5), Sindh-based Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) (3), Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP) (1), two Independents, and Awami Muslim League (1). However, with the numbers changed after at least two of the PTI's allies, MQM-P and the BAP along with few independent candidates drew back their support and joined the opposition. This fragile coalition coupled with the rise in the number of dissidents within the ruling party's ranks led to its collapse.

Second, the opposition's aggressive move against Imran. The opposition had jointly taken efforts to remove the PTI government since 2020 with the launch of the Pakistan Democratic Movement. However, their efforts have aggressively intensified with the filing of the no-confidence motion in March 2022. Both the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League- Nawaz (PML-N) and other opposition parties have engaged actively in rallies, inter-party meetings and strategic planning to remove Imran Khan. When it comes to the number, three main opposition parties, Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) (84), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) (56), and Maulana Fazlur Rehman's Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) (15) have the support of Balochistan National Party (BNP), Awami National Party and other PTI allies that have switched sides taking leaving them with sufficient numbers to pass the no-confidence motion. The results of which was seen when the opposition carried out the voting despite the house being dissolved.

Third, parliamentary proceedings and the judiciary. Deputy speaker Suri's decision has been heavily criticised as unconstitutional pushing the country towards another constitutional crisis. Additionally, the decisions made following the filing of the no-confidence motion are not in compliance with several constitutional norms. Thus, once again parliamentary proceedings end up in the judiciary as the Supreme Court took a suo motu notice of these developments, stating that these matters will be examined by the court before any decision are made.

Fourth, the Establishment's role. The Establishment has publicly made it clear that it is has nothing to do with the developments in the National Assembly. The Establishment has largely left the PTI government to fight its own political battles by taking a step back.

In perspective

First, another incomplete term. Pakistan has once again kept up its tradition of incomplete political tenures. The current political crisis in Pakistan reveals the difficulties both governments and its prime ministers face in completing their terms.

Second, Imran's exit and the opposition's entry. Imran Khan's decision to dissolve the National Assembly shows that he has accepted his defeat but chose to leave on his terms. Meanwhile, the re-energized opposition's game plan post their no-confidence move remains unclear. However, the opposition's unity would likely take a hit.

Third, the role of judiciary. The proceeding of Parliament has once again ended up in the supreme court, an unprecedented move. However, even if the court manages to resolve the legal or constitutional crisis, the political crisis is unlikely to be resolved soon.

Tunisia: Another political deadlock, as President dissolves the Parliament

In the news

On 30 March, President Kais Saied dissolved the Parliament. Saied said: "Today, at this historic moment, I announce the dissolution of the Assembly of Representatives of the people, to preserve the state and its institutions." Saied added: "We must protect the state from division ... We will not allow the abusers to continue their aggression against the state." Earlier, on the same day, parliamentarians met virtually and voted to repeal a presidential decree which had suspended the Parliament in July 200. The meeting was led by the former parliamentary speaker and leader of the opposition party Ennahda, Rached Ghannouchi. Saied termed the meeting as a coup attempt and maintained that elections will not be held within three months. Instead, he said there would be a new draft constitution for a referendum in July and elections would be held in December.

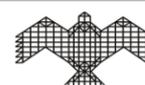
On 1 April, Ghannouchi said the anti-terrorism police had summoned him for questioning; several other parliamentarians in the virtual meeting were also summoned.

Issues at large

First, Saied's power grab. The dissolution of the Parliament comes eight months after Saied suspended Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi and the Parliament in July 2021. Saied invoked Article 80 and assumed executive powers; he replaced cabinet ministers with acting ministers. In September 2021, Saied announced to rule by decree wherein he could appoint a cabinet and draft and implement policies without objections. In December 2021, Saied extended the suspension until December 2022 and said elections would be held on 17 December. The date marks the beginning of the Tunisian Revolution which sparked the Arab Spring in 2011. In February, Saied also issued a decree to abolish the High Judicial Council and establish the Supreme Judiciary Council. With this, Saied gained powers to select, promote, appoint and transfer, and act as a disciplinary chamber to remove judges.

Second, the debate on the constitution. In 2014, Tunisia adopted a new constitution; Saied, however, opines: "This constitution is based on putting locks everywhere and institutions cannot proceed with locks or deals." The current constitution provides for the direct election of the President and a coalition elects the PM. Saied has been calling for a transition to a presidential system, while the opposition prefers a full parliamentary system. The largest opposition party, Ennahda, rejected the idea of rewriting the constitution and said, deviating from the 2014 constitution implies moving away from democracy.

Third, sentiments on the ground. Tunisians have been holding demonstrations against Saied's power grab. Al Jazeera quoted several protesters who said that Saied's has failed to see the ground reality; Tunisia has been undergoing an economic crisis and unemployment, exacerbated by the covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. In January, Saied launched an online poll to assess the public's opinion on rewriting the constitution. However, less than six per cent of the voters participated in the poll.



In perspective

First, over the last year Tunisia has been in a political fix. Under the Kais Saied administration, Tunisia is witnessing one of the most tumultuous periods since the 2011 revolution. People have lost hopes for a better future as they bear the brunt of a political and economic crisis.

Second, the move to suspend and dissolve the Parliament, and interfere in the judicial process has helped Saied solidify his power. Therefore, Saied's decisions have been taking Tunisia further away from the democratic reforms that the revolution had once envisioned.

Yemen: Finally, a ceasefire

In the news

On 1 April, the warring parties of Yemen agreed to an UN-mediated ceasefire on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan. It is the first nationwide ceasefire attempted since 2016. The deal was brokered between the Houthis and the Saudi-led coalition coming into effect from 2 April. The foreign minister Ahmed Bin Mubarak tweeted: "We immediately announce the release of the first two fuel ships through Hodeidah port." On 1 April, a press release by the UN Special Envoy for Yemen stated: "I would like to announce that the parties to the conflict have responded positively to a United Nations proposal for a two-month Truce which comes into effect tomorrow 2 April at 1900hrs. The parties accepted to halt all offensive military air, ground and maritime operations inside Yemen and across its borders; they also agreed for fuel ships to enter into Hudaydah ports and commercial flights to operate in and out of Sana'a airport to predetermined destinations in the region; they further agreed to meet under my auspices to open roads in Taiz and other governorates in Yemen. The Truce can be renewed beyond the two-month period with the consent of the parties."

On 2 April, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said: "You must take that momentum in order to make sure that this truce is fully respected and that it is renewed and that a true political process is launched."

Issues at large

First, the history of ceasefires in Yemen. The warring parties in Yemen - the Houthis and the Saudi Arabia led coalition have witnessed multiple ceasefires since the violence began in 2014. The Geneva talks of 2015 and the Kuwait talks of 2016, which resulted in UNSC resolution 2216 failed to stop the violence. The Stockholm Agreement of 2018 also resulted in a failure due to implementation issues- Sanaa airport remained closed despite demand by the Houthis.

Second, the scope and purpose of the ceasefire. The Houthis effectively control the internal resources of Yemen. By establishing a gray market mechanism where they impose additional taxes on the sale of goods and services and selling fuel at their own gas stations, the people particularly in the North relies more on the Houthis than the government. As a result, the Hadi government has fallen short of resources. Saudi Arabia led coalition which funds the Aden government has agreed to the truce despite having a conflict of interest to preserve the survival and strength of the Hadi government. Moreover, it gives time for armies to recuperate and restock. However, the ceasefire does not include the civil war against AQAP and the southern secessionists. The scope of the ceasefire agreement also does not stop all forms of violence in the country.

Third, the underlying economic warfare. The ceasefire agreement only prevents explicit violence and does not address the economic warfare tactics adopted by the two governments. The split of the central banks, the ban of currencies issued by the Aden central bank, and the lack of foreign exchange have depreciated the Yemeni Riyal to an abysmal level. Even though ports are currently open for commercial traffic, the Yemeni population will not be able to afford imports and will continue to rely on international aid for survival. Violence in the form of food riots and water resource warfare is not mitigated and hence expected.

In perspective

First, the question whether the ceasefire will hold. It seems less likely that the terms of the truce will be upheld by all the parties as evidenced by precedents. Second, it remains imperative that the interests of the people should be put first instead of a regional battle. Third, political processes that hold integrity need to be initiated by all the parties involved and this truce should be utilized as a starting point.

Ukraine: Russia's battle for Mariupol

In the news

On 31 March, Russia's President, Vladimir Putin claimed that "the shelling of the besieged Ukrainian city of Mariupol will only end when Ukrainian troops surrender." Chechnya's leader Ramzan Kadyrov has been sent to Mariupol to raise the fighting spirit of the soldiers and to procure them extra weapons. He claimed that "Russian servicemen are going from building to building to free Mariupol from Nazi bandit groups."

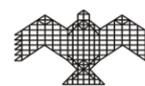
On 3 April, Russia's Defense Ministry said, "High-precision sea and air-based missiles destroyed an oil refinery and three storage facilities for fuel and lubricants" at Odessa that were supplying fuel to Ukrainian troops.

Issues at large

First, the Russian strategies in Mariupol. Russia has forcefully deported thousands of Mariupol civilians to Yaroslavl and Taganrog regions. Although, Russia agreed to open humanitarian corridors from 31 March, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has already postponed its evacuation endeavors twice due to unfavourable external conditions. Further, Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk accused Russia of blocking bus convoys that were heading to evacuate Mariupol civilians. The region is running out of food and water making daily life strenuous for the civilians. Additionally, Russian attacks on civilian infrastructure have rendered grave human casualties.

Second, Mariupol's strategic significance for Russia. The town's location is crucial for Russia's geostrategic objectives and its historical ties. It is a port in proximity to the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk. The city is part of Putin's vision of "Novorossiia" consisting regions of Kherson, Kharkov, Donetsk, Lugansk, Nikolayev and Odessa. Moreover, the Mariupol control would legitimize Putin's agenda of de-Nazification as the region houses the Azov battalion which has strong roots in Neo-Nazi groups. Additionally, Russia intends to construct a land corridor between the Donbas region and Crimea which would help it acquire control over 80 per cent of the Black sea coastline and hinder Ukraine's maritime trade.

Third, Russia's Black Sea objectives beyond Mariupol. Prior to the war, Russia used to conduct regular military exercises in the Black Sea. The international agreement permits Turkey to block Russian warships to navigate across the black sea in the time of war by shutting off the



Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits. These straits are strategically significant for Russia as the latter's Black sea fleets are stationed in the Black sea, the Sea of Azov and the Mediterranean Sea which facilitates its Mediterranean Squadron operations and supply operations in Syria.

In perspective

First, Russia's military operations in Mariupol are likely to continue. While Russia has pledged to stop shelling in the wake of the surrender of Ukrainian soldiers, Ukraine has rejected any question regarding surrender. Russia's forced deportation of Mariupol civilians connotes that it is clearing the air to start the construction of the Crimea-Donbas land corridor. Furthermore, the presence of the Chechen leader, Ramzan Kadyrov in Mariupol to boost personnel morale indicates Russian swiftness in operationalizing its objectives.

Second, although Russia launched missile attacks on Odessa's oil refinery and storage facilities, it is facing serious difficulties in progressing beyond Mykolaiv. The strong resistance from Odessa civilians might further delay Russia from gaining control over the region. However, Russia can easily advance towards Transdnistria, Moldova's separatist-controlled region where Russian troops are stationed from Mykolaiv, and control Odessa, cutting it off from the rest of Ukraine.

Third, Russia's military weakness in specific spheres was brought to limelight through this war. Thereby, Russia might have to work on strengthening its logistics support and communication facilities to succeed in the long run.

Also, from around the world

By Padmashree Anandhan, Sejal Sharma, Satyam Dubey, and Vijay Anand Panigrahi

East and Southeast Asia

China: Tension over a military base in the Solomon Islands

On 5 April, the tensions between Australia, China and the Solomon Islands rose dramatically over a security treaty draft between China and the Pacific nations. While Canberra considers Beijing's military base in the Solomon Islands as a threat to its national security, China claims that Australia is promoting enmity and the US-led competition in the region. The Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, Manasseh Sogavare, believes that the stakeholders are not respecting its sovereignty.

China: Asks the UK to stop interfering in Hong Kong

On 4 April, Beijing condemned the latest report released by the UK criticizing China's Hong Kong policy. China urged the UK to stop interfering in Hong Kong. The UK, in its six-monthly report, criticized the law on safeguarding national security in Hong Kong's special administrative region. The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Zhao Lijian said: "Any attack and smear against the national security law cannot hold back the trend of Hong Kong's transition from chaos to stability and prosperity."

China: Promises to back the military junta in Myanmar

On 3 April, China vowed to back Myanmar irrespective of how the situation changes and vowed to provide unequivocal support to the military rule in Naypyidaw that seized power in 2021. China said that it wanted to deepen the exchange and cooperation with Myanmar. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said: "No matter how the situation changes, China will

support Myanmar in safeguarding its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, and in exploring a development path suited to its national conditions."

North Korea: Nuclear strike warning to South Korea

On 5 April, Kim Yo-jong, the sister of North Korean head Kim Jong-un warned South Korea of nuclear strikes in retaliation for any pre-emptive attack launched by Seoul on Pyongyang. The furious reaction came after the statement of South Korean Defence Minister, Suh Wook, who spoke on South Korea's ability to strike Pyongyang's missile launch points. North Korea's testing of several missiles has heightened the tensions in the Korean Peninsula. A Senior Official of North Korea, Kim Yo-jong said: "In case South Korea opts for a military confrontation with us, our nuclear combat force will have to inevitably carry out its duty."

Japan: Proposes to increase its defence budget

On 5 April, Japan's Defence Ministry decided to request a larger budget for the next fiscal year to strengthen its defence capabilities. It aims to counter the military threats posed by China and North Korea in the Indo-Pacific. Japan said that it will go ahead with its plan to strategize an exclusively defence-oriented policy to acquire enemy base strike capabilities. Defence Minister of Japan, Nubuo Kishi said: "The defence budget is a major indicator that shows the nation's will. We want to ensure a budget that is enough to strengthen our defence capabilities drastically for the fiscal year through March 2024."

Australia: Upgrades missile systems

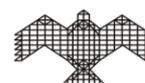
On 5 April, Australia announced the rearming of fighter jets and warships to increase its deterrence against potential adversaries Russia and China. Australia has planned to buy long-range strike missiles years ahead of schedule. It is also planning to equip with FA-18F Super Hornet fighter jets, which would improve US-manufactured air-to-surface missiles by 2024, JASSM-ER missiles, and ANZAC Class frigates. Along with this, the Hobart Class destroyers would be equipped with Norwegian-made Kongsberg NSM missiles by 2024. Defence Minister of Australia, Peter Dutton said: "When we look at what's happened in Ukraine, there is the prospect of Russians going into Poland or somewhere else in Europe. That would be a repeat of the 1930s and that's not something that we should allow to happen."

Australia: ADF Bushmaster to be sent to support Ukraine

On 4 April, Australia is repainting and modifying four ADF Bushmaster vehicles to send them to Europe after a direct public request from the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The Defence department took the initiative to provide the Bendigo-built armoured vehicles to the war-torn nation. The Prime Minister of Australia Scott Morrison said: "Australia would meet President Zelenskyy's request, by not just sending our prayers ... we're going to be sending our armoured vehicles, our bushmasters as well, and we'll be flying them over on our C-17s."

Thailand: Insurgency group agrees to stop violence during Ramadan

On 2 April, the government and the rebel group Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) agreed to halt violence during the holy month of Ramadan. The government delegation and the representatives of the BRN held peace talks earlier in Malaysia after a two-year pause owing to the Covid-19 pandemic. Since the old rebellion caught fire again in 2004, more than 7,300 people have died in insurgency-related violence in the provinces of Narathiwat, Yala, Pattani, and parts of Songkhla, a Muslim area in southern Thailand. The Thai government hailed the talks as significant progress.



Indonesia: Education Minister rejects proposal to make Malay the second official language

On 4 April, Malaysia proposed to make Bahasa Melayu or the Malay language the second official language of ASEAN. Indonesia's Minister of Education rejected the proposal, stating Bahasa Indonesia would be a better option as it is the most used language in Southeast Asia, with usage in over 47 countries. He also took into consideration the attempt by Malaysia to uplift the Malay language at the ASEAN level and called for a review and debate on the matter.

Myanmar: Military leaders face criminal charges of torture filed in Turkey

On 29 March, the Myanmar accountability project (MAP) filed criminal charges of torture against Myanmar's junta leaders. Although the details remain confidential, the case centers on reports that expose the tortures and abuses by the junta in the military interrogation centre in Yangon's Mingaladon Township. MAP calls this complaint a first of its kind to be brought before a national court system outside of Myanmar and describes it as a response to the minimal efforts shown by the UNSC on this subject.

Myanmar: Ten activists and a protest leader sentenced by prison courts

On 4 April, Yangon's Insein prison court handed three-year sentences to nine student activists and a journalist for expressing their opposition to the military dictatorship in the country. Out of the ten individuals sentenced for sedition under section 505a, five were Yangon's student union members while four were university students. In another instance, Man Zar Myay Mon, an anti-coup and environmental activist from Sagaing's Chaung-U township was sentenced to two years in prison for incitement while four charges are still pending against him.

South Asia

Nepal: PM Deuba expresses a desire to resolve border disputes with India

On 2 April, India and Nepal discussed the boundary issues as Nepal's Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba urged India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi to establish a bilateral mechanism to resolve the dispute. The two Prime Ministers inaugurated the first cross-border rail link between India and Nepal during their meeting in New Delhi. Nepal also signed on to the framework agreement of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and became its 105th member. It was the first bilateral meeting between the two countries since the Kalapani boundary issue took shape in November 2019.

India: AFSPA to be removed from three north-eastern states

On 31 March, Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced the removal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) from several districts across Assam, Nagaland, and Manipur. Amidst rising voices against the misuse of power by the security forces, the government removed the AFSPA from 23 districts entirely and one partially in Assam, along with 15 police station areas in six and seven districts of Manipur and Nagaland respectively. This decision is another step toward the Centre's idea of a 'dispute-free Northeast' taken just two days after the historic border settlement between Assam and Meghalaya.

Afghanistan: Strict ban announced on the cultivation of opium poppy

On 3 April, the Taliban administration issued a decree banning the cultivation of opium poppy. It warned against harvesting the crop as it would be burnt and the cultivator would be treated according to Sharia law. Transportation, trade, import, and export of heroin, hashish, and alcohol were also declared illegal. The major powers have expressed their concerns over the drug trade in the country, therefore it becomes an important issue for the Taliban to address as it seeks formal international recognition.

Central Asia, Middle East and Africa

Syria: Mercenaries volunteer to fight in Ukraine for Russia

On 5 April, after Russia's President Vladimir Putin announced the recruitment of fighters from Syria. Many through the Wagner mercenary group have volunteered to fight in the Donbas region. Fighters are to be paid a tariff ranging from \$200-\$1000 a month.

Turkey: Transfer of Khashoggi trial to Saudi Arabia

On 1 April, in hopes of mending ties with Riyadh, the Chief Justice of Turkey expressed a positive opinion on Saudi Arabia's request to transfer the Jamal Khashoggi trial. Human rights groups like Amnesty International criticized the move deeming it "spineless." Saudi Arabia cannot be expected to hold a fair trial due to a conflict of interest. The next hearing is expected to happen on 7 April.

Iran: The US sanctions the ballistic missile network

On 31 March, the Biden administration announced the sanctioning of the ballistic missile programme of procurement run by an agent named Mohammed Ali Hosseini. It claimed that the materials procured by the network are used by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and defense industries for producing weapons. The sanctions will impact through the freezing of US assets of related companies and bar any Americans from associating further. These sanctions have been levied directly following the recent attack by Iranians near the US Consulate in the Erbil region of Iraq.

Mali: Army reports the killing of combatants in a military operation

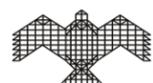
On 2 April, Mali's army killed 203 combatants in an operation with the UN peacekeeping mission. The operation took place in the Mora region, where the army sized a large number of weapons and arrested 51. In the statement issued by Mali's military, it reported that after information on social media on the killing of 300 civilians, it said that through the operation 300 terrorists were neutralized. According to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, "disastrous consequences for the civilian population."

Somalia: The UNSC votes to authorize AMISON

On 1 April, the UNSC voted uniformly to approve African Union's new transitional mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to give the legal authority to act against armed groups such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS. AMISOM located in the Horn of Africa has been involved in building peace and security along with the AU Transitional Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). The recent years have been chaotic in Somalia due to the al-Shabab group and the rise of ISIL-linked armed groups. The US Deputy Ambassador Richard Mills said: "The ATMIS mandate provides the opportunity to adapt and reinvigorate the African-led, international effort against al-Shabab."

Africa: UN urges Europe to ease border access for Libyan Migrants

On 4 April, the UN's refugee agency requested Europe to be "generous and welcoming," to the migrants from other parts of the world. A recent report states that close to 90 people had drowned in the Mediterranean Sea while trying to cross from Libya to reach Europe. The EU has been under constant criticism for cutting off migrants from the Libyan Coast Guard reaching the shores of Europe. Post crossing the Libyan migrants also face abuses in the detention centres. The UNHCR chief, Filippo Grandi said: "It must now urgently consider how to apply this to other refugees and migrants knocking, in distress, at its doors."



Europe and the Americas

Russia: Ministry of Defence denies killings in Bucha

On 3 April, upon the repeated accusations of killings in the town of Bucha located near Kyiv, the Russian Ministry of Defence has rejected all the condemnations from the West. It countered by saying "the latest provocation and the latest fake by the Kyiv regime," of Ukraine to accuse Russia. The same was also posted on Russia's Telegram channel stating the killings in Bucha as fake. In the post: "The Ukrainian Armed Forces subjected the city to artillery strikes, which also could have led to civilian deaths."

Ukraine: Forbes report on global supply chain disruptions

On 03 April, Forbes reported the continuing war and its implications on global supply chains. Interos, a supply chain risk management company, stated how nearly 300,000 companies in the US and Europe had suppliers in Russia and Ukraine and now face continuing issues. The report further mentioned how the war had caused the most significant shift in supply chains. Interos founder and CEO Jennifer Bisceglie said: "Continued pressure on global supply chains will exacerbate imbalances between supply and demand, causing increased inflation and potentially stagflation."

The United Kingdom: Ministry of Defence report on Russian troop developments

On 4 April, the UK Ministry of Defence reported on increased shelling in the city of Mariupol, it pointed out that Russia's objective to capture Mariupol was to establish a land corridor from Russia to Crimea. It also added that Ukrainian troops had a strong resistance and still hold a key part of the city in control. Later the UK intelligence said that Russian troops and mercenaries were recouping and consolidating its offensives, military company in Donbas.

Mexico: Ukrainian refugees offered shelter

On 4 April, a sports centre in North Tijuana was turned into a government shelter for refugees fleeing from Ukraine. Around 400 refugees, including women and children, were transferred to the shelter. This comes ahead of the United States easing restrictions for asylum seekers at the border. Law enforcement officers and resources have been amped up at the Tijuana-California border entry point, as the US promises to rehabilitate up to 100,000 Ukrainians. Approximately 1700 Ukrainians have entered Tijuana in the past few weeks.

Peru: Curfew imposed after nationwide protests over rising prices of fuel and fertilizers

On 5 April, President Castillo enforced a curfew in Lima and Callao after lorry drivers and farmers blocked roads while protesting over the rising fuel and fertilizer prices. The sharp rise in prices, as a consequence of the war in Ukraine, triggered nationwide protests. Furthermore, the blockade on major routes caused a surge in food prices.

Ecuador: Violent rampage inside prison kills 20

On 4 April, El Turi jail saw a lethal riot break out amidst inmates as one of the gangs tried taking over the prison. The clashes killed at least 20 inmates, who were found mutilated and tortured. Members of the security forces were deployed to bring the situation under control. The culprits were identified, however, inmates are yet to be disarmed. The increase in prison violence is seen as a result of incursion by transnational crime cartels into Ecuadorian gangs. Since last year, around 320 inmates have been killed in prison and gang violence.

Brazil: Flash floods and landslides cause eight casualties

On 2 April, heavy torrential rains triggered floods and landslides across Rio de Janeiro. The increase in frequency and intensity of these downpours are attributed to the occurrence of La Nina and climate change. At least eight people, including six children between ages two to fifteen were found dead. Additionally, 13 people were reported missing. The latest storm has displaced several people and destroyed homes and civilian facilities. National Disaster Response Secretary Alexandre Lucas and military aircraft were deployed to aid and monitor local rescue efforts in the state.

The US: Pentagon commits second round of military assistance to Ukraine

On 2 April, the Pentagon announced a USD 300 million aid in military supplies as security assistance to Ukraine. The supplies include ten switchblade drones, missiles, machine guns, armoured vehicles and tactical secure communication systems. The aid will be sent under the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative which allows the US to procure arms directly from manufacturers instead of using its own stockpiles. The Pentagon reportedly has spent USD 1.6 billion in security assistance to Ukraine since the war started.

The US: President Biden calls for trial for war crimes in Ukraine

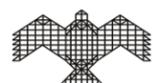
On 4 April, as graphic images of civilian killings in the Ukrainian town of Bucha emerged President Joe Biden accused Russian President Putin of war crimes and called for a trial. Mass graves and tied-up bodies shot at close range were discovered in Bucha, which triggered a global outcry. The US seeks to impose further sanctions on Russia and build a case against it at the International Criminal Court (ICC) or another avenue as it is not a party to the ICC. Russia has consistently denied being a part of the violence and has called it a staged show by Ukraine to tarnish its image.

The UN: Secretary-General warns on climate disaster

On 2 April, IPCC released a report on climate disaster, the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres criticized the governments and the business leaders for lying and warned that the climate crisis will be catastrophic.

About the authors

Chrishari de Alwis Gunasekare is a Research Assistant at Sri Lanka Press Institute. Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Apoorva Sudhakar, and Padmashree Anandhan are Project Associates at the School of Conflict and Security Studies, NIAS. Lavanya Ravi and Sruthi Sadhasivam are postgraduate scholars at Christ (Deemed to be University), Bangalore. Sejal Sharma, Satyam Dubey, and Vijay Anand Panigrahi are postgraduate scholars at Pondicherry University, Pondicherry.



Conflict Weekly

An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

30 March 2022, Vol.2, No.53

30 days of War in Ukraine

Padmashree Anandhan



Source: Institute for the Study of War (21:00 GMT, 31 March)
Photo Source: BBC/Institute for the Study of War

30 days of Ukraine war: Developments, trends and perspective

[In the news](#)

On 24 February, Russia's President Vladimir Putin began the invasion in Ukraine, launching troops into Ukraine. The launch marked the start of the war in Europe since World War II.

On 27 February, the EU announced a ban on airspace to prevent Russian aircrafts from entering its space. The EU and its allies agreed to cut down Russian banks from SWIFT along with the US. It is the most relied financial telecommunication system of Russia used in oil and gas exports.

KONRAD
ADENAUER
STIFTUNG

National Institute of
Advanced Studies

Conflict Weekly

An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

23 March 2022, Vol.2, No.52

Sri Lanka's worsening economic crisis

Chirshari de Alwis Gunasekare



Besides the economic crisis, there is also a serious energy crisis in Sri Lanka, people are standing in long queues in front of the oil stations. (Image Source: REUTERS/DINUKA LIYANAWATTE)

The worsening economic crisis in Sri Lanka

[In the news](#)

On 17 March, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa addressing the nation, on the current economic crisis claimed: "This crisis was not created by me. When those who contributed to the creation of this crisis are criticizing the government in front of the people today, I am attempting to immediately resolve this crisis and provide relief to the people... The root cause of current issues is our foreign exchange crisis."

[Issues at large](#)

First, a brief note on the current economic crisis. Sri Lanka's economy was hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is currently facing the most severe economic and energy crisis recorded in recent history due to the ongoing foreign exchange shortage. The prices of essential

KONRAD
ADENAUER
STIFTUNG

National Institute of
Advanced Studies

Conflict Weekly

An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

16 March 2022, Vol.2, No.51

The end of Denmark's Inuit experiment

Apoorva Sudhakar



Danish PM meets and apologizes to survivors of the 1950s' little Danes experiment. (Image Source: peopledispatch.org | Aaja Chemnitz Larsen MP)

Denmark: PM apologizes to survivors of "little Danes" experiment

[In the news](#)

On 9 March, Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen apologized to the victims of a social experiment in the 1950s wherein 22 Inuit children were separated from their families and taken to Denmark to "re-educate" and integrate them into the Danish society.

On the same day, the PM met with six survivors; The Guardian quoted Frederiksen: "What you were subjected to was terrible. It was inhumane. It was unfair. And it was heartless... We can take responsibility and do the only thing that is fair, in my eyes: to say sorry to you for what happened." CTV News quoted Greenland Prime Minister Mute Egede: "This is part of our common history... The truth has emerged and it is a truth which hurts to look back on."

On 9 March, CTV News quoted one of the survivors: "Our parents said yes to the trip but were hardly aware of what they agreed to."

KONRAD
ADENAUER
STIFTUNG

National Institute of
Advanced Studies

Conflict Weekly

An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

09 March 2022, Vol.2, No.50

International Women's Day: Gap between policies and realities on gender equality

Mallika Joseph



International Women's Day was celebrated on 8 March 2022 across the world. (Image Source: UN Women)

International Women's Day: Gap between policies and realities on gender equality

[In the news](#)

On 8 March, the world celebrated International Women's Day (IWD). The UN's theme for International Women's Day 2022 was "gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow," with a special emphasis on climate change. It was aligned with the priority theme of the 66th meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) held in March every year. This year's priority theme is "achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes." In his statement on IWD, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres pointed out that women primarily bear the brunt of climate change and environmental degradation. Further, he acknowledged that the clock on women's rights was moving backwards in many areas, particularly due to the pandemic, and called for bold action and massive investment to address gender inequality.

KONRAD
ADENAUER
STIFTUNG

National Institute of
Advanced Studies

Conflict Weekly

An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

2 March 2022, Vol.2, No.49

Russia's Ukraine Invasion: One Week Later

D Suba Chandran



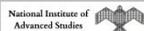
Photo Source: news.un.org

Russia's Ukraine Invasion: One Week Later

[In the news](#)

On 26 February, a group of leaders across the US, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the European Commission, came together to "condemn Putin's war of choice and attacks on the sovereign nation and people of Ukraine." The joint statement underlined their resolve to "continue imposing costs on Russia that will further isolate Russia from the international financial system and our economies" and undertake the following measures: to ensure that "selected Russian banks are removed from the SWIFT messaging system" thereby disconnecting these banks from their global operation; to impose, "restrictive measures that will prevent the Russian Central Bank from deploying its international reserves," so that the international sanctions are not undermined by Russia; to act "against the people and entities who facilitate the war in Ukraine and the harmful activities of the Russian government," addressing wealthy Russians linked with the Russian government; to launch "a transatlantic task force that will ensure the effective implementation" of the sanctions; and, to coordinate "against disinformation and other forms of hybrid warfare."

On 26 February, the Russian news agency TASS reported the Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov saying: "Immediate measures are certainly being taken in order to mitigate the damage from sanctions and ensure the unhindered operation of all economic sectors and systems... (Russia) has every possibility and potential to do that... Analysis will be required to determine the retaliatory measures that would best serve our interests."



Conflict Weekly

An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

23 February 2022, Vol.2, No.48

Russia's Ukraine salami slicing and Canada's freedom convoy protests

D Suba Chandran & Sarasi Ganguly



Russian President recognizing the two separatist regions of Ukraine on 21 February, is followed by a "Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance" between Russia and the two "new republics" - Luhansk and Donetsk. (Image Source: kremlin.ru)

Russia's Ukraine salami slicing

[In the news](#)

On 21 February, Russian President Putin signed an executive order recognizing "Donetsk People's Republic" and "Luhansk People's Republic" - two regions in eastern Ukraine, that were waging a separatist war with Kyiv. Two separatist leaders Denis Pushilin (Donetsk), and Leonid Pasechnik (Luhansk) were with Putin in Moscow for the event. On the same occasion, Putin also signed two separate agreements - "Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance" with the "Donetsk People's Republic" and the "Luhansk People's Republic." The treaty "reaffirms the policy of the Russian Federation to develop comprehensive, forward-looking cooperation" "provides for broad cooperation in the political, economic, social, military and humanitarian areas" with the two regions. On 22 February, the Duma ratified the order.



Conflict Weekly

An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

16 February 2022, Vol.2, No.47

Unfreezing the Afghan assets, Tunisia's judicial crisis and Libya's new political deadlock

Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Poulomi Mondal, and Harshita Rathore



An executive order signed by President Biden on Afghanistan says the US administration "will seek to facilitate access to \$3.5 billion of those assets for the benefit of the Afghan people and Afghanistan's future pending a judicial decision." (Image Source: Reuters-Stringer)

Afghanistan: President Biden signs order to split USD seven billion in frozen Afghan assets

[In the news](#)

On 11 February, President Biden signed an Executive Order to help enable certain US-based assets belonging to Afghanistan's central bank, Da Afghanistan Bank. The order claimed that "this is one step forward in the United States' effort to authorize the transfer of a significant portion of the funds to meet the needs of the Afghan people."



Conflict Weekly

An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

09 February 2022, Vol.2, No.46

Freedom convoy protests in Canada, and a de-escalation over Ukraine

Sarasi Ganguly and Ashwin Immanuel Dhanabalan



Led by the truck drivers, the anti-COVID measures protest took a new turn in Canada with the use of heavy trucks to block roads and bridges. (Image Source: CNN)

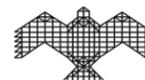
Canada: Freedom convoys and a new wave of protests

[In the news](#)

On 8 February, thousands of truck drivers in Canada, with heavy vehicles and rigs, blocked the Ambassador Bridge, the busiest route connecting Detroit to Windsor, Canada. On 7 February, Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson declared a state of emergency in the city over the protests against vaccine mandates. Mayor Watson suggested that the emergency was needed for police to control the protestors who are being called "volatile." Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said in a statement: "Canadians were shocked and frankly disgusted by the behaviour displayed by some people protesting in our nation's capital."

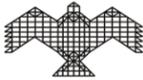
[Issues at large](#)

First, the state of COVID-19 protests in Canada. The protests started in January when the Canadian government imposed a vaccine mandate, compulsory covid testing and quarantine on truck drivers entering Canada through the US-Canada border. A convoy of truckers protested this move, calling it a violation of rights. Under the banner "Freedom Convoy," a





National Institute of
Advanced Studies



About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI)

The International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI), initiated in 2018 at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), is a part of the Conflict Resolution and Peace Research Programme at the School of Conflict and Security Studies.

IPRI undertakes research on various issues relating to peace with special emphasis on radicalisation, sustainable peace, gender roles in peacebuilding and global protest movements. IPRI research are published as briefs, reports and commentary.



About Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation. Established in 1955 as “Society for Christian-Democratic Civic Education”, in 1964, the Foundation proudly took on the name of Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. With 16 regional offices in Germany and over 120 offices abroad, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation is committed to achieving and maintaining peace, freedom and justice through political education. KAS promotes and preserves free democracy, social market economy, and the development and consolidation of the value consensus. KAS also focus on consolidating democracy, the unification of Europe and the strengthening of transatlantic relations, as well as on development cooperation.

KAS cooperates with governmental institutions, political parties and civil society organizations, building strong partnerships along the way. In particular, KAS seeks to intensify political cooperation in the area of development cooperation on the foundations of its objectives and values. Together with the partners, KAS makes a significant contribution to the creation of a global order that empowers every country to determine its own developmental priorities and destiny in an internationally responsible

About Conflict Weekly

The Conflict Weekly an academic endeavour to bring every Wednesday/Thursday a weekly analysis of the conflict and peace processes in the world; aiming to look at the larger peace picture. It is published by the NIAS-IPRI in collaboration with the KAS India Office.



Editor: D. Suba Chandran

Assistant Editor: Padmashree Anandhan

Editorial Team: Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Apoorva Sudhakar, Sejal Sharma, Satyam Dubey, and Vijay Anand Panigrahi